

# What You Should Know Before You Apply For Social Security Disability Benefits



**T**his kit was sent to you because you requested an appointment to file for disability benefits. During that appointment, a Social Security claims representative will interview you and complete an application for benefits. The interview will take place either in your local Social Security office or by telephone. It will take at least 1 hour. Please check the enclosed appointment confirmation letter for the date, time and location of your appointment.

Following are answers to the questions most people ask about applying for disability benefits. Knowing the answers to these questions may help you better understand the program and how to file your application.

## • How does Social Security decide if I am disabled?

By law, Social Security has a very strict definition of disability. To be found disabled:

- You must be unable to do any substantial work because of your medical condition(s). For example, in 2004, substantial work means earnings of \$810 or more a month. This amount may go up each year; **and**
- Your medical condition(s) must have lasted, or be expected to last, at least 1 year, or be expected to result in your death.

## • My doctor says I am disabled. Is that enough to qualify me for disability benefits?

You cannot get disability benefits solely because your doctor says you are disabled.

## • If I am already getting disability payments from my job or another agency, can I automatically get Social Security disability benefits?

No. Social Security disability laws are different from most other programs. Social Security does not pay benefits for partial disability.

## • How long does it take to make a decision?

It takes about 3 to 5 months to get a decision. This depends on how much time it takes to get your medical records and any other evidence needed to make a decision. The more information you can provide, the better your chance for a quicker decision.

## • Can I do anything to speed up the decision?

Yes. You can speed things up by making sure you have the information listed on the checklist for your interview. (The checklist is the pink document enclosed.) Bring the documents and information with you. If you are having a telephone interview, have all of the information with you when we call. Do not delay your appointment even if you do not have all the information listed.

You may also shorten your interview time by using the enclosed Medical and Job Worksheet prior to the interview. (The worksheet is the green document enclosed.) You should also bring in any medical records you have, and bring in all of the medicine you are taking.

(over)

# What You Should Know Before You Apply For Social Security Disability Benefits

You can complete a Disability Report online at [\*\*www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityreport\*\*](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityreport). The information you provide online could shorten the interview time and could speed up the claim. This online form contains help screens that will assist you in completing the form. The green worksheet can help you complete the Disability Report on the Internet or to prepare for your interview.

## • How do you make the decision?

Your application will be sent to the agency in your State that makes disability decisions for us. The State Agency has doctors, other medical professionals and vocational experts. The State Agency will contact your doctors and other places where you received treatment to get your medical records.

After the State Agency receives your records, they may ask you to have an examination or medical test. If you need another examination or test, the State Agency will contact you. You will not have to pay for any examination or test the State Agency asks you to have. Responding promptly to requests by the State Agency and keeping appointments for tests will help speed up a decision on your claim.

## • If Social Security decides that I am disabled, what types of benefits can I receive?

The Social Security Administration pays disability benefits under two programs:

- Social Security Disability Insurance for insured workers, their disabled surviving spouses and children (disabled before age 22) of disabled, retired or deceased workers.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for people with little or no income and resources.

## • Can I apply online?

Yes. In addition to completing the Disability Report online, you can apply online for Social Security Disability Insurance. Simply log on to [\*\*www.socialsecurity.gov/applyforbenefits\*\*](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applyforbenefits). The online form has help screens to help you complete the form.

*NOTE: You cannot apply online for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).*

## • Will my personal information be kept safe?

Yes. The Social Security Administration protects the privacy of those we serve. Our first regulation was written to ensure your privacy. As a Federal agency, we are required by the Privacy Act of 1974 (5U.S.C. 522a) to protect the information we get from you.

## • What if I am more comfortable speaking in a language other than English?

We provide free interpreter service on request to conduct your Social Security business. This service is available when you talk to us by phone or in a Social Security office.

## • Where can I get more information?

You can check our website at [\*\*www.socialsecurity.gov\*\*](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), ask the interviewer during your appointment or call **1-800-772-1213** (TTY: **1-800-325-0778**).

[\*\*www.socialsecurity.gov\*\*](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)



Printed on recycled paper

## **WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR DISABILITY INTERVIEW**

You should have as much of the following information as possible for your interview. Use this checklist to keep track of the information you gather. You can use this envelope to keep your information together.

**Keep your appointment. Do not delay filing even if you do not have all of the information. We will help you get any missing information.**

- ☐ An original or certified copy of your **birth certificate**. If you were born in another country, we need **proof of U.S. citizenship** or legal residency.
- ☐ If you were in the military service, the original or a certified copy of your **military discharge papers** (Form DD 214) for all periods of active duty.
- ☐ Your **W-2 Form** from last year, or if you were self-employed, your federal tax return (IRS 1040 and Schedules C and SE).
- ☐ **Workers compensation information**, including date of injury, claim number and payment amount.
- ☐ **Social Security Numbers** of your spouse and children.
- ☐ Your **checking or savings account** number if you have one.
- ☐ **Name, address and phone number of a person** who can get in touch with you if necessary.
- ☐ **Medical and job information:**
  - ☐ Names, addresses and phone numbers of all doctors and other treating sources.
  - ☐ Patient ID number of each treating source.
  - ☐ Dates seen by each treating source.
  - ☐ Names of medicines you are taking.
  - ☐ Medical records in your possession.
  - ☐ Kind of jobs and dates you worked in the 15 years before becoming disabled.

*See enclosed green worksheet to help gather this information.*

# MEDICAL AND JOB WORKSHEET - ADULT

**This worksheet can help you to prepare for your interview or to complete the Disability Report on the Internet. It lists some of the information we will ask you. You may want to write down some of this information in the space provided so you will have it at the interview. We will not collect this worksheet.**

**A.** When did you become unable to work? (Month/Day/Year) \_\_\_\_\_

**B.** What **medical condition(s), illness(es) or injury(ies)** limits your ability to work? \_\_\_\_\_

**C.** We will ask you about your medical treatment. What **doctor/HMO/therapist or other person treated your condition(s), illness(es) or injury(ies)** or whom do you expect to treat you in the future? What **month and year** were you there, or expect to go there next?

**Name, Address, Phone, and Patient ID Number(s)**

**Date(s)**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**D.** What **hospitals, clinics, or emergency rooms** have you been to, or expect to go to? What **month and year** were you there, or expect to go there next?

**Name, Address, Phone and Hospital/Clinic Number(s)**

**Date(s)**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**E. What medications do you take and why do you take them? If they are prescribed, we will ask the doctor's name who prescribed them.** You can bring your prescription bottles with you.

**Name of Medication and Why You Take It**

**Doctor's Name**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**F. What medical tests have you had or are going to have? We will ask the name of the place where you were tested, the date of the test, and the name of the person who sent you for the test(s).**

**Name of Test**

**Place Where Tested**

**Person Who Sent You**

**Date(s)**

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**G. What is your medical assistance number?** \_\_\_\_\_

**H. What kind of work have you done in the 15 years before you became disabled? We will ask you for the information below.**

<b>Job Title</b> (e.g., Cook)	<b>Type of Business</b> (e.g., Restaurant)	<b>Dates Worked</b> (month & year) <b>From: To:</b>	<b>Hours Per Day</b>	<b>Days Per Week</b>	<b>Rate of Pay</b> (Per hour, week, year)
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	\$ _____

**Keep your appointment. Do not delay filing even if you do not have all of the information. We will help you get any missing information.**